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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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# THE SCIENCE OF RIGHT LIVING.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—Eph. iv., 31, 32.

This fourth chapter of Ephesians, if some incidental material that is in it were eliminated, might be considered as a medal struck, representing the ends of Christianity, perhaps better than any other in the whole New Testament—the positive and the negative. In the 13th and 16th verses we have the positive :

"Till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:"

"Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying [building up] of itself in love."

There is the positive side—the generic and ideal aim of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Then comes the negative side :

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another. Be ye angry and sin not."

There is no half-way obedience to that last command.

SUNDAY MORNING, December 28, 1873. LESSON: Eph. iv. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 180, 381, 11.



There are a great many who start on it, and get as far as being angry, and go no further. The command is, "Be ye angry and *sin not*." How to be angry in such a way as not to sin is a great, a divine art.

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, [that whole round and raft of mischievous moods and states of mind which inflict so much suffering on life,] with all malice, [with every attitude, with every inflection of experience which implies trouble to others, by your thoughts, by your feelings, by your conduct, or by your want of conduct—everything that indicates hurt, harm to your fellow-men,] and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Christianity I define to be the science of right-living. It is the *new manship* of the world. The forces which it employs are various; but the end which it seeks is definite—namely, perfect manhood in Christ Jesus. This is the object. Everything else is instrumental and relative. It can never be understood, then, in the letter, nor in the philosophy. To understand Christianity you must see it in the living form. Never can you see it, nor can you ever understand it, speculatively. No man can understand a garden by a book. If he has seen a garden the book will help him. If he has not seen a garden the book will be something; but the book is a guide to the garden, while the garden is the thing itself. The whole frame-work, and all the filling up, of the gospels and the letters of the New Testament, are secondary instrumental elements, the end being the new man in Christ Jesus. The power of Christianity does not lie in its history, nor in its statements of fact, nor in its systems of worship; it lies in that which the statements of truth and the systems of worship and discipline produce in mankind. For it is not the letter, but the *living epistle*, as the apostle suggests, that is the wisdom and the power of God; it is Christ in men; it is God revealed in the human disposition; it is a kind of secondary, diffusible incarnation of God in the race.

Consider the influence on human life of the strong malign element which man inherits. Consider what would be the effect on the whole arrangement of society, and the whole in-

tercourse of men, if the conditions of the 31st verse of this chapter could be instantly carried out. Consider what would be the effect if men should at once put away "all bitterness." Bitterness is that which means mischief. It is not indignation, which may be lordly and very kind: it means that which the snake means when he strikes with his fang. There is death in it. Bitterness, whether it is calm, whether it is silent, or whether it is obstreperous and vocal, should be laid aside. Consider what would be the effect if men should put away all "wrath"—hot and malign; all "anger"—quick and virulent; all "clamor"—disputes, high words, quarrelings; all "evil speaking"—whisperings, back-bitings, tale-bearings, running to and fro to blow up mists which shall chill or injure people; "with all malice." The apostle enumerates a few things, and then sums up the whole matter by including all things that belong to the hurting power of the mind; and he says, "Let them all be put away from you." Suppose society should instantly discharge itself of all these acrid elements which exist everywhere? The change would be so great that the atmosphere of life would seem different.

You know how, in the early spring of the year, there come from the north and the west those ice-bearing winds that almost, in spite of your raiment, cut you to the very marrow; how, if you are enfeebled, and have no resisting power, you shiver and shrink at home, or in the street find it hard to stand up and move about in your avocations; how, nevertheless, an unseen hand swings around the wind so that ere you are aware of it, before your attention is called to it, you are conscious that you are breathing another atmosphere; and how, at last, when you look at the weather-vane you find, sure enough, that the wind has turned to the south, making the air warm and humid like that of summer.

Now, a change as great as that would come over human society if all the pain-bearing elements in persons, if the power which persons have of making others unhappy, should be purged away, laid aside, destroyed, by the incoming of the divine Spirit. That ought to be; that was meant to be; that is to be.

A great many people have a feeling as though to be just,

to be stern, to be hard, to be cold, at times, was very manly and very noble. No, never! The human soul derives its pain-giving power from its animal connections. That power comes from the beast that is in men. It is part and parcel of that "old man" which is to be destroyed, laid aside, and purged away. The "new man" in Christ Jesus is to have power, but it is to be a power that inheres in kindness and love—in that new temperature which comes from heaven, and envelops the whole man. If in the family there were no more naggings, no more twittings, no more pinchings, no more snappings, no more snarls, no more scowls, no more morosenesses, no more selfishnesses, no more jealousies, no more evil speakings, it would be a different place. When the fire is first kindled, and the smoke cannot find its way through the pipe into the flues, and it flows into the room, filling it full, you throw every door and window open, and in a little while all the smoke is swept out of the room, and the fire begins to burn, warming the chimney, and the draft is good, and the smoke passes through its proper channel. The difference between a room full of smoke and a room without a particle of smoke in it is the difference that there would be in a household if the inmates knew how to put the old man out and how to put the new man in, and keep him there all day long, and during their whole life. Bitterness on the part of one member will turmoil and lower the tone and destroy the happiness of a whole household. One ugly nature is enough to distemper an entire family; and, on the other hand, one light-shedding, joy-bearing nature is enough to restore the equilibrium of a disturbed family. Great is the power of a human soul.

In the intercourse of men there is an affected kindness, or a kindness put on. It is called "politeness." It ought to be genuine; but even in its present form it is beneficial. It makes society possible. It obliges men to inject poisons disguisedly or not at all. Etiquette, courtesy, requires that men should treat each other gracefully, pleasingly. It tends to make the intercourse of society harmonious. And that which externally politeness strives after belongs interiorly to the Christian new man. It is his nature. Society itself would be immensely relieved, and far more fruitful of good,



if this spirit could be made prevalent. If out of business all envyings, jealousies, strifes, hardnesses, wrath, and clamor could be taken away, how smoothly it would flow on! What a manufactory is whose hundred looms and whose thousand spindles have not been oiled for months, so that they shriek and squeak on their rusty pivots turning, that is business; and what such a manufactory would be if every joint of every loom and every spindle were oiled so that the noise should cease and nothing should be heard but the regular sounds of industry, that business would be if all the bitterness which belongs to the lower and animal nature were taken out of it. That "old man" that everybody has something of, and that everybody starts full-freighted with, is a very bad business man. He makes business slow, painful, and wearisome; but the new man whose nature it is to cast out that which produces pain and bring in that which produces happiness, joy, benevolence—oh, that we could get him into the partnership!

In the strifes and collisions of public affairs, in the conduct of the State, in the settlement of questions of debate, in the management of the great interests of the commonwealth, how is the malign element all the time at war with the real good of men!

If you want to know why it is that men so prematurely grow old; if you want to know why it is that there is a mystic handwriting on their faces, it needs no Champollion to explain this: it is because in the family, in the social circle, in business, in public affairs, everywhere, there is an element in the human constitution which asserts itself, and is continually rasping, wearing, wasting men by destroying their peace of mind and making them unhappy in various ways. That is the reason why the world goes on at such a groaning rate. But if a change could be effected so that men should carry only their sweet natures into their household affairs, into their business, and into the administration of public matters, how different it would be! If the dominant temper of all rulers, of all magistrates, of all legislators, of all functionaries in public affairs, was kindness, what a different influence they would exert upon society! If what men wanted and

strove for and had was good-will; if it exhaled from them; if it was their real nature; if in the conduct of business it was their first, their second, their third, their continuous impulse; if under pressure, under trial, under temptation, that side of their mind was ever presented; if even when bruised it were fragrant; if in social relationship the one constant breathing of the soul was from the side that produced kindness and good will, incessantly, always—if such were the state of things, the new heavens and the new earth would have come.

The trouble with this world is that men use their bottom nature almost exclusively, and only attach to it their top nature here and there. The faculties of human nature which are usually employed are basilar and malign. The world groans and travails in pain because it is under the dominion of the animal nature that is in the old man, and not under that of the nature of kindness which is in the new man.

Consider the intrinsic beauty and moral power of a nature in which the malign element is subdued, and the whole emissive force of the soul is genial, benevolent, and helpful. Looking upon an individual as you would upon a picture, a statue, or a fine piece of architecture, is there anything that men so much admire as a strong, grand nature that acts invariably in the line of kindness?

We know very little about William Shakespeare as a man; but if it should be discovered, by some old letters, by some history (which will never be dug up) that he was an envious, jealous, spiteful man, it would throw a cloud over the brilliance of his life-work. It would be subject-matter of sadness to every one who loves humanity. But if you could discover letters which showed that aside from his extraordinary power (which, perhaps, in his line, was greater than that which has been vouchsafed to any other human being before or since), he was as full of gentleness and sweetness and kindness as the most notable and beautiful natures which he created in his matchless dramas, and that he wrote that which was bad in his works, not out of his own self, but out of his observation of the world, would not everybody feel that, great as his dramas are, he was greater than any of them? Do not men



long to find heroes ; and finding them, is it not the tendency of better culture, as it rises, to seek better natures, and to crown the illustrious ones of earth with goodness rather than with evil ?

So long as the world stands we shall admire the intellectual force of Napoleon, but as the world grows older it will less and less call him a full hero, because in his disposition and nature he was malign, without moral principle, and without any spiritual instinct. He was a hero on the lower plane of life.

More and more as we grow, we appreciate the finer traits that are in human nature. Men going out into life never forget the mother who stays at home, and who has presented to them a nature with reason dominant, with a high moral sense, with refined and sweet affections, with taste, with patience, with gentleness, with self-sacrifice, and with disinterestedness. A man may go through all the world ; he may become a pirate, if you please ; he may run through every stage of belief and unbelief ; he may become absolutely apostate ; he may rub out his conscience ; he may destroy his fineness in every respect ; but there will be one picture that he cannot efface. Living or dying there will rise before him, like a morning star, the beauty of that remembered goodness which he called *Mother*.

There are men who are so cynical that they swear the whole race to hell ; but they always spare some one person—wife, or sister, or mother. There is a single character that survives universal annihilation in their thoughts. There is nothing that takes hold of a man's very being so much as a nature that seems to be well nigh perfect.

That is the reason why fiction is so influential upon us. Writers of fiction can fill their books with just such creatures as they please ; and the consequence is that they are populous with angels. We yearn for that which is angelic ; and when we come into its presence we find it too good to be thrown away. When we meet persons who seem to be endowed with goodness we wait ; and if after waiting we find that they are what they seem to be, whether the goodness is native to them, or whether it is implanted in them by divine

grace ; if we find that their bent is happiness-producing ; if we find that they are just the same under trials and temptations as under other experiences, we cannot, no matter who we are or what we are, help admiring their character, and feeling the power of it. It is more than a sermon ; it is more than a rebuke ; it is more than a judgment-day ; it is more than anything in the world that comes in the shape of expository truth. The light of a real Christian life shining on men puts them to more shame than the cunning sentences of the most pungent discourses. Nothing is so sweet and encouraging to the soul as to see a nature blossoming under the influence of the divine Spirit. I do not mean folks who sing a good deal, and pray a good deal, and talk a good deal, and attend meetings a good deal, and are on committees a good deal ; these things are excellent, and they may be among the fruits of piety, but they are not piety. I mean people whose nature is sweet and fragrant, and who pour that nature out on other people, and make it felt everywhere. I mean persons who fulfill perfectly this command :

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice ; and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Find such a nature as that, and tell me if there is another power in the world that produces such an effect on you as it does.

Now, that is the gospel. You say the gospel is a history of Christ. I say it is not. The gospel is the spirit of Christ in a living form before you. It is Christ manifested to you—so much of Christ as human life can interpret ; so much of Christ as constitutes the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation to those who believe. It is not the letter, which is a mere instrument. The gospel is the *living form* of those qualities which were embalmed in Christ, which are recorded of him, and which have been exhibited by his disciples in every age. Therefore the church is called his body. The reproduction of his dispositions in man constitutes the gospel. The divine elements, as set forth by Christ, and as developed in men, are the real gospel. There is not a bit more gospel

in this world than there is in the living hearts of Christian people. All else that goes by the name of the gospel is dead. There are unrisen Christs, any number of them; there are any number of Christs in printer's ink; but of Christs in men, the hope of glory, how many are there? If I were to call the roll to-day for men who have to any considerable extent by their example made people think of Christ, how many of you would dare to respond?

I know when a man has come into my house wearing fragrant flowers. I enter the room, and say, "There has been mignonette or grape blossoms here, one or the other, I cannot tell which." I know it by the fragrance that they have left behind them. A man comes in, and I say, "Who has tuberoses here? Somebody has." The fragrance that these flowers have is such that it cannot be disguised. If a man has the odor of balm or myrrh about him, the perfume of it is distinguishable. Take me into a pine forest, and you cannot persuade me that I am in an oak forest. I know the odor of the pine. If you were to take me into a new-mown field, it would be useless for you to tell me that I was in an old barn. You could not deceive me in that way.

Take into the presence of those who are capable of spiritual discernment a true Christian man, and the impression he makes is unmistakable. Some men come where you are, and when they go away you are screwed up, and you do not know what the matter is. Your nerves are all tense, and you cannot understand why. It is the old man in them that affects you so. Other people come into your presence, and when they go away you are relaxed, and feel weak and nerveless. Other people come in, and somehow when they go away everything looks blue to you. There is a mist over everything. You cannot see clearly. Other people come in, and when they go away everything looks bright to you. The effect of such persons' presence is soothing to a man, especially when he is very sensitive by reason of a slight sickness. I have known persons that came into my room when I was indisposed, whose faces did me more good than all the medicine they left. There was a courage, there was a hopefulness in it, there was a kind of sweet buoyancy in them. I have



talked with men of such natures that when they went away I felt cleaner ; and life looked larger and better to me by reason of the radiance which they threw over it.

Now, persons may be in one church or another ; they may be professors or non-professors of religion ; but then I say, that the divine element in man, the new life, is unmistakable ; and when it is exerted on the minds of men they do not want to resist it—they cannot resist it. That distinctive element is the very essence of the gospel itself. The power of the gospel does not lie in historical statements ; neither does it lie in systematic arguments : it lies in the living force of the higher moral nature of the church and of the community at large. There is just so much gospel in the world as there is of this sweet, higher nature, exerting itself on human life, and no more.

Now, do not admit this too easily, because the inferences are very strong, which I am going to draw from it.

If, then, this be the true idea of the gospel force in the world, we must be careful how we allow other things to become substitutes for it, or usurpers of its place. To a very large extent, spiritual rapture has been substituted for it. It is not strange that men have not well understood and discriminated and defined the higher moral nature ; because they are less conversant with its elements than with any others. When, therefore, a man is carried off in the direction of the invisible, and has ecstatic emotions, and great joy in devotional exercises or meditation, and especially when his experience takes the form of rapture, and is high, and clear, and beautiful, men feel as though that man were living very near to God. He seems to them angelic. He may be, and he is more apt to be than one who has no such experience ; but true Christian experience does not always take on the form of rapture. If rapture is the fruit of this other experience—the discharge of the malign element from the mind ; the putting down of the animal nature ; the subduing of the old man ; the bringing unto ascendancy of the new man ; the development of tender-heartedness and lovingness—then it is very significant and very powerful ; but there are many persons who are capable of going off at will into spiritual poetism.

You do not misunderstand me when I say that one person has a mathematical genius, that another has an oratorical genius, that another has a poetic genius, that another has an artistic genius, and that another has a musical genius; but sometimes people are shocked when I say that a man has a praying genius; and yet it is true that there are persons who have a genius for praying. But it has not, necessarily, anything to do with character. Some persons are so configured that they pray naturally. They are fluent in prayer—for there is a fluency in praying as much as in speaking. There is oratory toward God as well as oratory toward men. It is good or bad according to the circumstances. There are persons who have unbounded facility in imagination, in creation, in bringing near ten thousand interior, spiritual elements. There are men who can call up at any time a vision of heaven, and people it with glittering angels. There are men who can project their thoughts into the far future, and depict to themselves wonderful spiritual things. Persons may thus be almost carried away. But a man may be capable of all these things, and yet not have a true Christian character.

Mere spiritual rapture, then, as it is taught in many churches and by large sections in our time, if it is the fruit of foregoing sweetness, of the love-element in Christ Jesus, is not to be despised; but when you are seeking the “higher life,” as it is sometimes called, when you are uniting yourself to that class who are searching the “perfection,” as it is called at other times, and suppose that spiritual ecstasy is the highest form of human experience, you put the effect for the cause. You substitute something else for that mood which is like the state of mind that was in Christ Jesus. What was that state of mind? God so loved the world that he sent Christ to die for it; and Christ so loved the world that he died for it, and prayed for it as he died. So, one whose nature is based on Christ Jesus has discharged from his mind all malice. The whole operation of his thought and feeling and will is such that it carries no pain, no harm, but joy, goodness, well-wishing, peace, good will. He is a new man.

Now, if that mood comes with higher and higher forms of rapture, it is all the better. I never like anthracite coal so well as I do cannel coal, because it will not blaze. It is like good matter-of-fact folks. It has a great deal of heat, and will carry it a great while; but it is not so pleasant as cannel coal, which not only has plenty of heat, but has a blaze which goes roaring up the chimney. Imagination is a desirable trait; and it does not prevent the co-existence of all the other excellent traits. I like practical, sedate men, who are as full of goodness as a cluster is of sweetness, even if they do not have anything else; but if they can break out into a blaze, also, I like them still better.

See how natural it is that persons should confound the two things, and suppose because people have rapture that therefore they are distinctively patterns of Christian life. No, no! The Christian life lies under all that, and is the cause of it. If there is nothing substantial under the rapture, if there are no coals, if there is only the blaze from some light, inflammable material, the flaming ecstasy is fictitious, it is a substitute, and not only a substitute, but a usurper of the true Christian experience, which begins and ends in love.

Consider, too, the forces which have been exerted and the efforts expended to compass the truth as it presents itself to the intellect, as if that were the thing that the world seeks, and not the truth as it presents itself to the heart. There has been such an immense amount of intellectual teaching under the name of Christianity, the truth has been so dissected, so analyzed, and so brought into the form of ideas, that really men have frequently no comprehension of what is the true gospel nature of confessions, creeds, etc.

Suppose I wanted to show a man what a magnificent thing an orchard was in October mellow days, and suppose I should take him into my cellar and show him a barrel which contained cider that had turned to vinegar? He would say, "That is your orchard, is it? Well, the less I have of it the better I like it." Then I say, "If you do not like it, I will show you good old cider that has not turned to vinegar." He does not like that, either; so I show him new cider, and give him a straw. He says, "That is not so bad, but it does not answer



at all to your description of an orchard." At length, finding that the man is so unreasonable, I say, "Then I will go back with you another step;" and I take him into the mill-house where the apples are in a trough, well crushed. The pulp, the seeds, the rinds and the stems lie together there in a mass; and I say, "That is an orchard." "Well," he says, "it is a dirty, slushy orchard." At last, perceiving that he is utterly discontented, and will not be satisfied with anything short of a real orchard, I take him out into the lot and show him the trees. "Ah!" he says, the moment his eye catches a sight of them, "now I understand all the rest. This is beautiful!" He stands in the orchard, and says, "I would not ask for anything better than to have a cottage here, and live in the midst of such a wealth of beauty, and be a cultivator. How pleasant it would be to look upon the flowers and foliage, and listen to the songs of the birds, and gather in the rich, ripe fruit!" He thinks an orchard is splendid when he looks upon the actual thing.

Here is the garden of the Lord—the Gospel. Here are the beautiful plants of righteousness, the precious fruits of the Spirit—humility, meekness, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, tender-heartedness, joy, love—growing in the hearts of believers. A theologian comes in, and says, "I want to show you the Gospel." So he rolls out his old cider barrel full of vinegar. "That is it, boiled down, fermented, brought to a *pint*." Yes, I should think it was! He brings forward what he has crushed out of the living form, and declares that that is the Gospel; but it is the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth remove from it. He points out the old still where the manufacturing processes are carried on, and where various elements, after having gone through men's thoughts, are made into a philosophy; and he speaks of the result as though that were the Gospel. He begins with the existence of God; then he goes through the history of revelation; and then he deduces from revelation this, that, and the other doctrine. He states these things as regularly and with as much facility as a man would call the roll of a military company, referring to chapter and section, and giving hideous quotations from the dear old Bible, the writers of which never dreamed that they

would be used to prove any such things as men seek to prove by them. He preaches a set of intellectual doctrines all the year round; then he turns about and preaches them over again; then he preaches them cross-wise, every which way, as letters are sometimes written; and that he calls preaching the Gospel. And the newspapers are full of diatribes against men who do not turn the same mill as they do; who do not take the truth and intellectualize it; who do not convert heart-life into philosophical life, which is a totally different thing. The great mistake is made of supposing that an intellectual system is the Gospel. I aver that there is no Gospel except that which is in the lives of men. The wisdom of God in the production of gentleness, sweetness, patience, long-suffering, disinterestedness, and self-sacrifice—that is the Gospel. There is no other. It is not in the book; it is not in sermons; it is not in my discourses to you; it is in *you*, or nowhere. Theologies are good for some things, but they lie when they tell you that they are *the* truth.

And that which is true of intellectual systems is still more emphatically true of dynastic Christianity. Far be it from me to deride church-government. All churches must have some sort of government. Government belongs to the law of association. Whether you write it down or not, it will take care of itself. It will go wherever men come together. Let five persons meet for any object, and in less than twenty minutes there will be a relative adjustment of their forces according to their individual peculiarities. Some will go higher than the others, and will have ascendancy over them, in the nature of things. When you put ten pounds into one scale and twenty into another, it is not a matter of accommodation that the ten pounds go up and the twenty pounds go down; it is in accordance with nature. And when men are associated with each other there is subordination and elevation; there are inferiorities and superiorities; and these things take care of themselves. There must be government in all churches. What sort of government it shall be depends upon the nationality of the people, their customs, and the habits of the time in which they live. Governments are like

clothes, which adapt themselves to the climates in which they are worn. They are of no more account than garments which are taken off and thrown away when they are worn out, or cease to be useful, new ones being substituted for them.

Do men to this day go back to the cedars of Lebanon for wood with which to build houses of the Lord? I should as soon think of saying that all synagogues and churches should be constructed of materials brought from Asia, as to say that men must go back to apostolic times and do now just what the apostles did then. We are to imitate the apostles; but the imitation is to be, not in doing what they did, but in doing, like them, that which is fit in every case.

A doctor is called to prescribe for a fever, and he gives a cooling draught. His young Esculapius, coming after him, is called to prescribe for congestive chills. He says, "My teacher gave a cooling draught, and I will give a cooling draught." He imitates his teacher exactly, like a fool. And there is no greater fool than a man who imitates just what the apostles did, instead of imitating the principle on which they did it. It is the inside that is to be followed, and not the outside.

One of my boys comes in crying, and says, "Father, I ran against a lamp-post, and bruised my face." I say, "My son, do not run against lamp-posts." The next day he comes in again with another bruise on his face, and says, "I did not run against a lamp-post; I ran against a tree." "Well," I say, "do not run against lamp-posts nor trees." The next day he comes in, having had another whack, and says, "I did not run against a lamp-post nor a tree; I ran against an iron railing." He had obeyed me, and yet he was hurt. But the spirit of my order was that he should not run against anything that would hurt him. "Well," you say, "the child that could not understand that would be an idiot"—but you ought not to, because in saying it you sweep away half the theologians of creation. For what they have been imitating has been the stitches, the hems, the seams in the garments of the apostles. There has been an outside imitation; whereas they should have imitated that which belonged to the inside. This they have not been big enough to see. They have found it



much easier to crawl around in the narrow limits of an animal, than to walk in the full largeness of a man.

Now, there are substitutes for the gospel in the shape of government, church polity, and modes of worship; there are discussions with regard to the gospel in its relations to history, in its relations to philosophy, and in its relations to the state. I think I may say that, on the whole, nine-tenths of the power of the human soul since the advent of Christ has been expended upon the external, accidental concomitants of the gospel; and that there has never been a time in which the whole force of any considerable body of Christians has been mainly and enthusiastically directed to the production of the real gospel—a manhood which has laid aside all malice, and is acting in the full power and enthusiasm of divine love. That is the gospel; and the producing of that is the very thing which men have not done, which they are not doing, and which they are railing at others for trying to do. There are to-day in the seat where God should be, grinning idols of theology, of church government, of church ordinances, of church polity, and of church worship.

That living disposition, that active spirit, which constitutes the gospel, has been relatively neglected, while undue attention has been given to religious systems and philosophies and doctrines which are means, but not the end.

The true test, then, of any church, or sect, or ministry, is not so much the knowledge which it gives, or the order which it secures, as its productiveness of new men in Christ Jesus, or of a higher degree of manhood; and it is an awful test. I do not know the man or the minister that can stand up under it. I cannot. When I see, where there is the least disturbance among you, where there is the slightest disagreement in a Sunday-school matter, that the old worthy members of my church, who have been many years under my ministry, act just like anybody else, and squabble, and, full of answerings, call back, and carry away hard feelings, I say to myself, “I have not made many *men* yet. My preaching has been as poor as any other minister’s.” One fails for one reason, and another for another; this man is running after ordinances, that man is running after doctrines, and I am running after

sentiment ; and we all come short together. When I judge from what you are, I feel that I am about as poor a minister as I know of.

Oh, that I might see a true ministry somewhere ! I would not fall down and worship, but I would count myself unworthy to loose the shoe-latchet of a man whose preaching was such as to bring together scores of Christian men who, in all things, under all pressures, in times of disturbance and in times of peace, still developed the sweetness, the beauty, the patience, the gentleness, the forbearance, the love, that is in Christ Jesus our dear Lord.

You are living epistles, known and read of all men, and your poverty is the worst criticism that can be made on my ministry. Whatever you do that is good and excellent is so much commendation of me, and whatever you do that is less than that is so much condemnation of me.

I remark, once more, that the only basis of Christian union in the world, as tested by the facts which I have thus far developed, is personal excellence. Men have been going about and endeavoring to unite people, but they will not succeed in doing it in the way in which they have undertaken it.

If I were sent out into the field and asked to make a bouquet that should please everybody, and if I were to get some burdocks, and some stinking-jimson blossoms, and some sun-flowers, and five or six other coarse-looking, noxious-smelling weeds, I could not put them together so that everybody would like them. It would be impossible to arrange them so that there would be harmony between them. One would want to be in this or that place, and another would want to be in the same place. The burdock would say, " Let me be there ;" the sun-flower would say, " No, let me there ;" and the jimson blossom would say, " Wait ! you don't smell half so strong as I do, let me be there ; I belong in the most conspicuous place." A pleasing bouquet could not be made out of these quarrelsome weeds.

On the other hand, let a man bring out of the garden, indiscriminately, a quantity of beautiful flowers, and I will defy him to put them together so poorly that everybody will not admire them. They will be lovely in spite of any carelessness

with which they may be arranged. Could one possibly be so unskillful as to put twenty rose-buds together so that everybody would not be glad to have them? It might be done better or worse, but in any case they would be so beautiful that any one would be pleased with them.

Men want to bring churches together, but they are so stenchful, they are so unbeautiful in their blossoming, they have so many repugnances, they are so rebellious, that you cannot unite them in their sectarian forms. You never ought to try. But just so quick as Christianity blossoms in *men*, and makes them beautiful, that moment they belong to all sects, and their fragrant and beautiful qualities find no trouble in harmonizing.

There are no walls that can keep me from taking the good of any man's garden. In England I walked the roads and saw brick walls built ten feet high around gardens; but there were the trees with their foliage, there were blossoming plants, there were birds singing merrily, and I had the joy of them, though I could not get over where they were. You may build fences about your gardens as much as you please, but I will see your trees, and smell your flowers, and listen to your birds. My eye is a universal rover; my nose gathers tax and custom from every sweet-smelling blossom; and my ear takes in all delightful sounds.

So every true Christian is my brother or my sister. Whoever is noble and self-sacrificing is mine. I do not care if it is he who sits in the Pope's chair, my invisible arm goes around that old man and hugs him for Christ's sake. I do not care what men's church connections are; if they are only men in Christ Jesus, they belong to me. And if I can so live as to produce on those who come near me the effect of Christ's love, Christ's gentleness, Christ's humility, Christ's meekness, they cannot help owning me if they really want in their hearts to ally themselves to that which is good. I do not care whether they are in the church or out of the church, I am among them. They cannot shut me out. You can scourge a man who stands on the lower physical plane; but a man who stands on higher spiritual ground you cannot scourge. You cannot imprison him nor cast him out. Chas-



tising him is like wounding spirits in whom the gash closes up as soon as the sword is drawn back. If you undertake to unite men by the outside, if you attempt to unite them by forms of doctrine, you will fail; but if you undertake to bring them together on the ground of intrinsic disposition based on the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot prevent their coming together. The great want in the matter of Christian union to-day is not a way, but *men*. It is the irresistible attraction of moral affinities that constitutes Christian union. There are various other things which prepare and smooth the way for it, but they are of no account without this vital element. Carving and ornamentation on a candlestick, and the candlestick itself, are all very well, but what does a candlestick amount to without a candle? All these methods that take away offensive creeds, and forms, and ordinances, and arrogant governments and pretensions, are well enough, but there can be no Christian union until there are men in the different sects who shall lift themselves out of the old man and into the new man in Christ Jesus, so that they shall begin to know each other interiorly, and form that atmosphere in which such union essentially consists.

Lastly, let me bring this matter home to you personally, my dear Christian brethren, as a very solemn test. If this is the testimony of the New Testament (and I am not afraid of any investigation that you may make into the subject), it is a question that I have a right to put to every one of you who supposes he is a Christian—not, When were you converted? and not, How were you converted? but, To what were you converted? To belief? To sectarianism? To devotion? Have you been converted to that kind of spirit which was in Christ Jesus, “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”? Have you been converted to the spirit of that Jesus who rose and girded himself with a towel, and washed his reluctant disciples’ feet, saying, “As I, your Lord and Master, do this to you, so ye must do it to

one another"? Have you been converted to the spirit of that Personage who declared that in his spiritual kingdom those who were willing to do the lowest offices were the ones who stood highest? Have you been converted to humility, to self-sacrifice, to unfailing kindness, and to love which casts out fear as well as wrath? Have you been converted to the new man who is in Christ Jesus? It is for you in your own meditation to search your heart and answer these questions to yourself.

Do you think that you have been growing in the divine life? Many of you think you have grown during the last year: in what respects have you grown? Have you grown in externals? That is well. Have you grown in that knowledge which is outside? That is not ill. But have you consciously grown in sweetness?

It is a shame for an apple that has set in the spring or in the early summer to be just as sour when November comes round as it was early in the season. You would not keep in your orchard a tree that bore such apples. You would cut it down. And yet, how many trees there are in the Lord's garden whose apples grow sour rather than sweet! How many men there are who came into the church five years ago, perhaps, and are no sweeter, if they are not sourer, than they were then!

Now, how has it been with you? Has it been the acid, acrid juice, or the saccharine juice, that has been developed in your nature? You can tell; or those who live with you can! It is a question that every man ought to put to himself. Every man ought to make an inventory, every man ought to take an account of stock, respecting his inner life. Every man ought to inquire what the unwritten books of his life, the books of his soul's consciousness, show.

What is the power of your life, Christian brethren? You are influential, and you seek place and opportunity to do good: what is the power on which you rely for doing good? Is it that of the external man, is it that of outward wisdom, or is it that which consists in the fact that your soul carries so much of the divine fervor and of the divine bounty that wherever you go God goes with you? If that be your power,

no man can narrow your sphere, and no man can hinder you. If you have not that power; if you have not that spirit of God which fits you for the emergencies and trials of life; if that Christ is not in you, who is not only the hope of glory but the spring of all moral influences, then you are weak indeed. By just so much as you lack Christ you are of the old man, and are of the flesh, fleshly.

This is our last Sabbath of the year. It is the last Sunday morning of the year. I would to God that every one of us might disrobe himself of much of the false covering that he has worn. Would that we might throw aside the patched and fantastic garments that have covered us. Would that we might put away the old and lower man. Would that, on this bright and blessed morning, we might sink our faults and transgressions out of sight, and, as God says, let them be remembered and mentioned no more forever. Would that we might begin a new year, Christian brethren, as Christ's men, inwardly, dispositionally, and from this time forth, with open throat, like flowers, pour out sweet fragrance, and, like trees, bear abundant fruits of the Spirit to the honor and glory of our God.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

ALMIGHTY God, we draw near to thee not abashed because we are inferior; nor are we separated from thee because we are unworthy; for thy great grace and goodness have taken away the sense of fear, and with it much of the sense of shame. We are drawn to thee by a graciousness that makes us forget our poverty. Thou art better to us than we know how to be to men; and yet, when the needy come, it is in the power of the gracious heart so to overshadow them that they forget their poverty, and forget everything but the kindness in which they stand, and which warms them with sweet life. Thou dost pour upon those who draw near to thee such tides of graciousness, and such sensible love, that they forget their sinfulness, and are conscious that they are children of God brought home by that grace which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So we come to thee remembering more of thy goodness than of our unworthiness, and aspiring to stand in the might and glory of thy nature rather than of our own, rejoicing that in the economy of thy grace, as the sun brings forth all things upon the earth, so the Sun of righteousness is bringing forth upon men all that is good and perfect. As the smallest flowers are not shamed when they look up into the sun, whose children they are, and toward whom the sun moves in its mightiness, and gives of its warmth according to its own nature, and not according to the nature of the flower; so we stand in thy presence, rejoicing in thee for what thou art, and not thinking of what we are. We rejoice that there is this perfectness of love which casts out fear, and checks our sense of distance from thee, and takes away from us all feeling of shame and humiliation, and lifts us up into the blessedness of heavenly relations. We are of thee as children are of their parents; and love banishes everything else, gives its own law, and brings its own fruit.

We bless thee for the experiences we have had. We bless thee for all the joy that has come to us. We bless thee for the interpretations of our life which thou hast vouchsafed to us. We bless thee for all the providences which have been messengers of God to us, and brought us gifts. We thank thee for those gifts which have brought sorrows as much as for those which have brought gladness. We know that the earth needs its night as much as its day, and that we need darkness as much as light. Thou sendest us winds that make us strong; and we thank thee for these; for we know that those things on which the wind doth not blow do not form wood. Were it not for troubles we should never be stiff or strong in the midst of the burdens of life. Thy storms are all nourishing storms. Thy strokes are the strokes of love. Thou art administering thy chastisements with fidelity; and thou art a better judge than we are of what we should have, and when and where we should have it. We rejoice to believe that in the circle of thine administration there are infinitely



more laws and providences than we know of by which thou art minutely and carefully watching over everything that concerns us.

We desire, O Lord, to rejoice in the thought that thy greatness is such that all our measures come short. We can have no sense or knowledge of the grandeur of the relations of thy thought and soul and purpose to the economies of life. So much as we know of that which thou hast revealed fills us with confidence that when the rest shall come it will be in analogy with this, and carry us up, so that thou wilt prove to be not only greater than we think thee to be, but infinitely better; that thy graciousness shall be found to be such as shall disarm all our fears, and bring in their place hope and encouragement, and give power to the hidden man within our souls; and that we shall be more than satisfied, and break forth in exultation, and join with those in the heaven above, and around about thy throne, in giving praise and dominion and glory to thee forever and forever.

We pray that we may not hide ourselves from the summer of thy heart—that we may be open to thee in such a way that all the chilling frosts of winter may depart from us; that every one of us may grow in grace; that the fruit of the spirit may be in us, and that we may be as gardens of the Lord, full of fragrance, full of beauty, and full of glowing fruit.

We pray that thou wilt help every one in thy presence in the work of his life, by which he seeks to put off the old man, and put on the new man, created in righteousness. We pray that we may not any of us be discouraged as we struggle against undue pride, unlawful desires, the appetites and passions of our lower nature. May we remember that we are in the battle as good soldiers, that whether it go against us or for us we are still to maintain our place and fight manfully, knowing who is our Captain and what is our Armory, that in the end even those who are cast down shall not be forsaken, that those who are wounded shall be healed, and those who are slain shall be brought more gloriously to life; and may we feel that it is not in vain that we are serving thee. So, through darkness and through light, through rude ways and through ways that are smooth, through discouragements and through encouragements, grant that we may have evermore such a sense of Jesus Christ formed in us, the hope of glory, that life shall seem to us worth having, and its ends worth striving for. While we do not disdain thine outward blessings, though we thank thee for the household, for food, for raiment, for society, for its relations, for all worldly things which we are enabled to enjoy, yet we desire, O Lord, to put highest the work which thou art attempting to carry on in our souls. We desire to look upon invisible things, and to discern afar off the inner home of the soul, with its companionships. May we prepare ourselves so that when we pass beyond the bounds of time we may stand in the plenitude of glory, and inherit with great joy that inheritance which awaits us, but which we have not seen.

We pray that thy blessing may rest upon the services of the sanctuary to-day. Grant, we beseech of thee, that thy truth may come more to us, not falling on the outward ear, but sinking into the inner

soul. By it may we be strengthened and inspired and carried forward in the Christian life. Bless thy churches. May all thy servants be clothed with that spirit which is from on high, and be able to make known to men Jesus Christ as the great Power of salvation.

We pray that thou wilt be with all those who are in distant fields of labor. We pray for those who are working for thy cause in foreign lands. Though they may not now see the fruit of their service, may they have faith that they will see it, by and by—in the world to come if not in this world.

We pray for all in distant parts of our own land, who are amidst trials and sickness, and solitude, and hindrances of every kind. Still may they patiently do their work, laying foundations which in their lifetime may never rise above the ground, but on which others shall build. May they be content to be builders of foundations, so that they be foundations of the temple of the Lord.

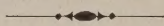
Bless, we pray thee, all classes of our citizens. Bless especially those who are most ignorant and needy; those who are subject to wrongs—particularly to violent wrongs which are inflicted upon them by their own passions through ignorance.

We pray that education may prevail, and that this whole land may be intelligent, and that it shall be an intelligence which shall take hold of morality and true piety.

Remember the President of these United States, and all who are joined with him in authority. Bless the Congress assembled. Bless all governors and legislators and judges. Bless all that bear rule. May they rule diligently, and in the fear of God.

Bless the nations of the earth. We thank thee for those steps which are being taken toward brotherhood. We pray for the divine blessing upon all those influences which conspire to disarm the bloody hand, and bring in the heart that would shed its own blood rather than that the blood of another should be shed. Let that glorious day come when all races shall know thee and be joined to thee.

And to thee, Father, Son and Spirit, shall be praises, forever more. *Amen.*



## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt add thy blessing to the word spoken. Give to us that ripening spirit without which there is no summer for us. We never felt so much the need of thy presence and of thy divine, quickening spirit, which pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, as now. O Lord our God, thou of such love that thou didst die for us, and art living for us a life that is more glorious than dying, come among thy people. Cleanse them, inspire them, guide them, that they may become perfect men in Christ Jesus.

Help us to sing again to thy praise, then send us with joy and gladness to our several homes, and finally bring us to our Father's house in heaven, through riches of grace in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

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